

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 04148 091517Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00
EB-07 FMC-01 INR-07 NSAE-00 CG-00 DLOS-09 OES-07
PM-04 H-01 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 DHA-02 SCA-01 SCS-03 /090 W
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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2276
INFO PANCANAL
USCINCS

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAG: PLOS, CU
SUBJECT: REPORT OF US VESSEL DETAINED BY CUBA

REF: PANAMA 3976

1. EMBASSY REPORTED ALLEGED INCIDENT INVOLVING SEIZURE
OF US-FLAG SAILING VESSEL "THE WIZARD OF BRISTOL" (WOB) IN
REFTEL. ON JUNE 3, EMBOFF MET WITH DAVID E. WAITE AND JOHN
HARTFORD, CREW MEMBERS OF THE WOB, WHO AMPLIFIED ON THE INITIAL

REPORT OF THE INCIDENT PROVIDED TO THE EMBASSY BY JOHN DINNENY,
MASTER OF THE WOB.

2. ACCORDING TO WAITE AND HARTFORD, THE WOB ALMOST CERTAINLY
VIOLATED
CUBAN TERRITORIAL WATERS WHILE TACKING ON
A COURSE TOWARD THE CAYO PAREDON GRANDE LIGHT, WHICH THE CREW
BELIEVED TO BE CAY LOBOS LIGHT. REALIZING THEIR MISTAKE WHEN
THEY WERE ABLE TO MAKE OUT THE SURF LINE, THE WOB CREW WAS
ATTEMPTING TO RETURN TO HER BASE COURSE IN THE OLD BAHAMAS CHANNEL
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PAGE 02 PANAMA 04148 091517Z

WHEN CHALLENGED BY THE CUBAN GUNBOAT. CREW'S OPINION THAT THE
WOB WAS IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS WHEN THE CUBANS ORDERED HER TO

HEAVE TO IS BASED ON A DEAD RECKONING NAVIGATIONAL PILOT.

3. WAITE AND HARTFORD STATED THAT DINNENY, THE ONLY QUALIFIED

NAVIGATOR ON THE VESSEL, WAS PASSED OUT BELOW DECKS AS THE RESULT OF A PROLONGED DRINKING BOUT DURING THE WOB'S NAVIGATIONAL DIFFICULTIES AND INITIAL ENCOUNTER WITH THE CUBAN PATROL BOAT. THEY FEEL THAT DINNENY'S CONDITION INFLUENCED HIS DECISION TO IGNORE THE CUBANS' ORDER TO HEAVE TO AND THEY CHARACTERIZED HIS STATEMENTS THAT THE CUBANS "ATTACKED AND RAMMED" THE WOB AS OVERBLOWN RHETORIC; THE GUNBOAT LOADED ITS GUNS ONLY WHEN THE WOB IGNORED REPEATED ORDERS TO HALT, WHILE THEY ATTRIBUTED THE RAMMING TO INCOMPETENT SHIP-HANDLING.

4. ALTHOUGH THEY VIEW DINNENY AS AN UNSTABLE PERSON WHO SEEKS OUT TROUBLE AND TENDS TOWARD OVERDRAMATIZATION, WAITE AND ARTFORD RE-EMPHASIZED THAT THEY DID NOT WANT HIS PERSONAL PROBLEMS TO DETRACT FROM THE SERIOUSNESS OF AN INCIDENT IN WHICH THE WOB AND ITS CREW WERE SEIZED BY A CUBAN GUNBOAT AND DETAINED UNDER PROTEST IN CUBA WITHOUT ACCESS TO U.S. REPRESENTATIVES. THEY REPEATED DINNENY'S REQUEST FOR USG GUIDANCE AS TO WHAT CREW SHOULD DO ABOUT THE INCIDENT. GONZALEZ

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
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Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 09-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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